

*The guilt of forbearing to deliver our British
Colonial Slaves.*

A S E R M O N

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SERMON.

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If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain ; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not ; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it ? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it ; and shall not he render to every man according to his works ?

THERE are occasions when the minister of Christ must speak like the prophets of old. His duty, indeed, generally is to expound the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and thus to lay the foundation of improvement as to all the indirect evils of civil society. But if some one national obliquity directly violates the first laws of justice, humanity, and religion, he must step out of his ordinary course—he cannot innocently be silent. If this evil has been long connived at and forgotten, if it affects the present and future welfare of a whole race of his fellow-creatures—inoffending, helpless, misrepresented, degraded, oppressed—his duty becomes more imperative. If after thirty or forty years of public discussion and delay, a crisis should arrive when an united and determined effort might break their bonds and vindicate them into liberty, he is the more solemnly called on not to be wanting to the occasion. If nothing appears to oppose their deliverance but ignorance of the real facts, hidden selfishness, apprehensions of possible consequences, the flimsy excuses of an alleged expediency, his silence would be treachery to his conscience, his ministry, his God. To him the Almighty, under such circumstances, seems to say, as to his servant Isaiah, “ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”

Such is the case, I am deeply persuaded, with regard to British colonial slavery. The crisis is arrived. The Christian minister is bound to look the evil full in the face, and to detect that selfishness of the human heart, which leads a great nation to shrink from the trouble and inconvenience of doing justice to the oppressed. There is no form of selfishness more delusive than this. It suggests difficulties, it chills our best affections, it leads us to decline taking pains to learn the true bearings of the case, and it contents itself with a tame and barren acquiescence. Thus the prodigious magnitude of the evil is hidden, and then the conscience pacified on the plea that we know little or nothing of the matter—whilst, in fact, we neglect the positive duty of aiding to the utmost of our power

the unfortunate, and forget the radiance of that piercing eye which reads the secrets of our hearts, and which will render to every man at last, not according to his excuses, but according to his works. That is, we incur the very charge advanced in my text, "We forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; we say, Behold, we knew it not," forgetting the penetrating remonstrance, "Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it; and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Suffer me, then—I am compelled—I am penetrated with the conviction of my duty—to attempt to rend asunder the veil which hides from the eyes of so many of my countrymen, the guilt we are contracting by FORBEARING TO DELIVER OUR AFRICAN FELLOW-SUBJECTS. Suffer me to expose to the glare of day, the EXCUSES by which this neglect is palliated or denied. Suffer me to appeal to that ALL-SEEING EYE OF GOD, which may teach us to detect and silence, ere it be too late, these excuses, and to rise to the performance of an imperious and paramount duty.

I charge the British nation with apathy to the miseries of the friendless slave.

I dissipate the pleas by which this apathy is concealed.

I urge the duty of rescuing the oppressed, by the present omniscience of God, and the future solemnities of his judgment-bar.

Allow me your candid attention:—I am connected with no party; I intermeddle with no human politics; I accuse no individuals. I admit the humanity and piety of many, many persons connected unhappily with this system of injustice. I cherish no ill will to the interests, and much less to the persons, of the Colonial proprietors. I confine myself to the strict line of my duty as the minister of the Gospel, under the extraordinary circumstances of the case. It is a common cause which I advocate—the cause of degraded humanity; the cause of neglected and forgotten religion; the cause of the "poor and needy, and those who have no helper;" the cause of our national Christianity, fame, security;—the cause, in short, of all the parties implicated in the enormous evil, if they knew their own best interests, and would listen to the voice of righteousness and truth. And do thou vouchsafe, O Father of mercies, to aid this our attempt! The selfishness of man is too subtle, too powerful for any human arm to overthrow. But Thou hast given us thine own Son to die for the whole world! Thou hast established a dispensation of infinite love and grace, from which no differences of colour, or rank, or outward advantages exclude thy creatures. Do Thou vouchsafe to us thy help! Do Thou dispose the hearts of this nation, by the secret influences of thy Spirit, to perform the great duty of justice and mercy to which Thou now callest them, and to repair, so far as it is possible, the injuries which they have so long been criminally inflicting!

I. We charge, then, the British nation with neglect towards the miseries of the injured slave.

We have "forborn, and are now forbearing, to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain." We are restraining those sympathies, and withholding that active aid, which the magnitude of the calamity, the number of those who are suffering it, and our own relations to them, demand.

Can any terms describe more graphically the condition of our colonial slaves? They are seized and dragged away to punishments which are the precursors of death; they are oppressed continually; they are silently, but systematically, worn down by a slow and lingering exhaustion, which too often ends in a premature grave. Their condition is inconsistent with any due regard to their well-being either here or hereafter. The principles of animal, rational, domestic, spiritual happiness wither. The laws of eternal justice are reversed; the moral government of rational beings is exchanged for force and terror; the light and grace of Christianity are almost utterly excluded; our brethren, nearly a million of our brethren, are "drawn unto death, and ready to be slain." The waste of human life is going on by sure and unerring laws, under a servitude founded in injustice, embittered with scorn, and working with the fatal, though insidious, weapons of over-labour, disease, insufficient food, licentiousness, and the other fatal effects of oppression and despair.

The calamity is extreme, is urgent, ought not to be for an instant neglected. Individual cases of humanity deduct little from the mass of evil—slight and local improvements in subordinate points tell nothing against the aggregate amount—the more slow and silent progress of the poison in certain spots, is unobserved amidst the general moral pestilence. Unjust slavery with its deadly touch blights the hope of man, shortens human existence, embitters social enjoyments, imposes a burden which man cannot, and ought not, to sustain, places him at the arbitrary will of his fellow.

Are many words necessary to recall to your memory, the facts on which this charge rests, or to establish our criminality in forbearing to put a stop to them? I speak of no doubtful case. I take the facts avowed by friends and by foes. I go to the evidence published by order of Parliament. I take the history and apology of the colonists themselves. I appeal to the journals appearing daily in the islands. I state only the necessary fruits of such a system, considering what human nature is, and what all experience has proved it to be. Yes, such a system, under such circumstances, operating on a friendless race, at a distance from the mother country, must produce such kind of effects.

1. The British colonial slavery, then, is AN UNJUST YOKE IMPOSED UPON THE INNOCENT AGAINST THE FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF THE ALMIGHTY. I speak not of other species of bondage, in other ages, and under dispensations of religion, or forms of heathenism which place them in totally different circumstances. I enter not upon the abstract question whether all personal bondage be, under all modes of government, a violation of natural justice. That it is in all cases, except as the punishment of crime, contrary to the spirit of Christianity, is self-evident. But with this we are not now concerned. The mild,

domestic, servitude tolerated among the Jews, and terminated every seventh year by the law of release, and again vindicated at every fiftieth, by the trump of Jubilee, has no analogy with our present subject. As little has the Greek and Roman servitude which Christianity at its first promulgation found established by the laws, and growing out of the vices, of heathenism, and which she effectually succeeded in extinguishing, as her mild and merciful dictates were obeyed.

I speak now of a yoke imposed by Britons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; after ages of religious light and in the full glare of reformed protestant Christianity—imposed upon an unoffending people for the avowed purpose of sordid gain, and for none other: imposed not upon a people inhabiting the Western isles, but on a nation dwelling on the distant shores of Africa; sought for, robbed, seized, and kidnapped; transported across the sea in the horrible holds of slave-ships, and consigned to the doom of perpetual captivity. I say, that such a kind of slavery, imposed without a plea of justice, nay, in defiance of all the claims of natural right and international usage—such a yoke invented by the mere cupidity of gain, sixteen hundred years after the illumination of the gospel—such a yoke is *per se* evil, unjust, a sin against God, a violation of the fundamental laws of human society, both in its first imposition and in every hour of its continuance. Our poor negroes, are indeed “drawn unto death and ready to be slain.”

2. What begins in injustice must be carried on in crime, till the first injury be repaired—or all the laws of God’s moral government fail. It is thus with our colonial slavery. It has involved from its commencement, and involves now, A CONSTANT TENOR OF OPPRESSION, ARBITRARY POWER AND CRUELTY, ARISING FROM ITS VERY NATURE, AND INCAPABLE OF EFFECTIVE IMPROVEMENT WHILST IT CONTINUES. It is made up of these evils: they are the elements of its existence; they form the definition of colonial slavery. Man, urged by his fellow-man to the utmost efforts which despotic power and a cool calculation of immediate interest may dictate—man, forced to labour by the arbitrary will of his fellow, without compensation for his toil, without adequate protection for his person, without an impartial justice to determine upon his crimes or their punishment.—man, the sport of the selfishness, caprice, irritated passions, blunted feelings of his fellow—man, handed over from his first proprietor, to attorneys, and managers, and overseers, and drivers, with the same despotism delegated to the hired employers—man, leased out and farmed with the estate on which he vegetates, to the first adventurer—man, bought and sold in the market with the horse, and ox, and sheep, and farming utensils, amongst which he is classed; seized, levied upon, sold, bequeathed as other goods and chattels; liable to be forced into a jobbing gang, or condemned to a prison called a work-house, at the will of his lord—man, in short, placed at the mercy of man for food, for clothing, for labour, for medicine, for abode, for domestic comfort, for religious instruction, for all the primary necessities of his being;—and all this machinery of injustice set in motion by a base, degrading, and adventuring spirit of merchandize,

which must bring out an amount of profit in an inverse ratio with the comforts and just rights of the slave—What—what is all this, but a system of oppression, of cruelties more or less severe, of a secret waste of human life? And what is sugar island slavery but all this? Divested, indeed, of its torture, and mutilation, and chains, and first atrocities, by the force of British influence and the voice of the British Government—but remaining still the same in its essential properties, and working all its essential mischiefs. Such a state of things is unjust, irreconcilable with the fundamental relations in which God has placed man with man, a perversion of all moral government. A thousand instances of individual humanity may be alleged. I turn to the system. I say, no humanity deserves the name which does not break the yoke, and deliver man from the arbitrary will of his fellow. A thousand good intentions may be alleged. I turn to the facts of the case, and read in the decrease of population the irrefragable evidence of what is going on upon the whole. Alas! the poor Africans are “drawn unto death, and ready to be slain.” Instead of doubling their numbers in twenty or five-and-twenty years, as they do when unoppressed, they waste away at a ratio, which in less than sixty years from the present time would annihilate the race.

3. But this is far from being the whole or the worst part of the case. These are symptoms only, as might be expected from a system which reverses God’s order of moral government amongst his creatures. COLONIAL SLAVERY GOES TO DEGRADE AND DEBASE THE UNHAPPY AFRICAN, TO SINK HIM IN THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL SCALE OF BEING, AND EXPOSE HIM TO ALL THE EFFECTS OF HABITUAL CONTEMPT AND SCORN. A persuasion of innate superiority in the white master, a comparative indifference for the comfort and happiness of the inferior race, false notions of what is humane and reasonable engendered in this vicious atmosphere, a course of silent, wearing depression, founded on this contempt—these are the bitter roots of colonial maxims, colonial law, colonial practice. The system rests upon it, and would disappear if the negro were really accounted as equal in his rights, before God and before the laws of his country, with his oppressor. But slavery knows no such justice; there is one law for the white, and another for the black man. The difference of colour changes the immutable foundations of right and wrong. The slave exists not in the eye of the law, his evidence is not received, his property not secured, his domestic affections not regarded, his rights not protected, his injuries not redressed—his existence not recognized as a member of civil society and as living amongst fellow-men.*

Thus debased and degraded from the port and bearing of man, the poor slave is impelled, not by moral motives as God designed him to be, whilst the terrors of punishment are reserved for the culprit—but by wretched fear and brute force—the irrational domestic animal and

* The order in council of February last partially amends. point of law, many of those evils as to the crown colonies, containing about one-third only of the colonial slaves. In practice it will, to judge from all past experience, do little or nothing.

the rational and immortal fellow-creature are placed in the same rank, urged by the same cart-whip, branded with the same marks, (if brute creatures indeed, even in the colonies, are thus stigmatized,) sold in the same market, and registered as part of the same goods and chattels.

There is our African brother, brutalized, disinherited of his noblest birth-right! There he toils, a slave without hope, without the spring of effort which God had ordained for his consolation, treated as a thing, not as a person, labouring without the prospect of bettering his condition; and having no pleasures but the gross indulgence of appetite, the vacant state of ignorance, the bauble amusements of a debased and neglected intellectual existence. There he is with the springs of moral being snapped and broken asunder, and worked by the mere instincts of a brute, or the passions and fears of a savage.

It is this degradation which exhibits the slavery of our colonies in one of its darkest features, and which renders the mere sleekness of a negro's form, his occasional bursts of joy, his babyish contentment, his tame acquiescence in his state, only symptoms and evidences of the moral disease which blights all the glory of man. His feelings blunted, his mind sunk, he knows nothing of the elevated capacities of his nature; the immortal principle is almost extinguished—and then it is vaunted that the creature is satisfied and happy—and he is compared with the English peasant, who in every essential respect is in precisely opposite circumstances! No—the poor slave is “drawn unto death, and ready to be slain.” All the food and clothing and petty boons he may receive, and all his savage vices and joys, are only the chains to bind him as a mute sacrifice on the altar of degradation and woe.

4. And this leads me to notice the last fatal step in the climax of misery—this poor friendless creature, unjustly enslaved, oppressed, degraded, is EXCLUDED FROM THE CONSOLATIONS OF RELIGION, AND PREVENTED FROM RECEIVING ANY EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION IN THE TRUTHS AND DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY. The system is incompatible with the general diffusion of the religion of love and purity. Its injustice cannot bear that light—its oppression would turn pale before that revelation of grace—its debasing degradation would only appear more odious before the universal mercy of the lowly Jesus. A form of religion may be admitted—some instances of the extraordinary grace of God (especially amongst the domestic slaves, and those in towns) may appear—a partial care of religious instruction may be forced on the planters. But any adequate, cordial, effective inculcation of real Christianity amongst a slave population such as that of our colonies, is incompatible with the whole system. The field negroes, who form the immense majority, remain in heathen darkness, vice, misery. They are “drawn unto death, and are ready to be slain,” in a spiritual as well as literal sense. We might expect this from the preceding facts. All holds together in such a case. A system of oppression can never lead to a religion of love. For who are to be the poor negro's tutors?—his task-masters, or those whom his task-masters permit. What example of Christianity is set him by his imperious oppressors?—carelessness, irreligion, unsub-

duced passions, arbitrary will, concubinage, blunted and extinguished human feelings, hatred, and even persecution of all sincere and heart-felt piety. This is the general example of the white man. Exceptions are found to this picture; but the reaction of colonial slavery on the masters, degrades them, as a class, in all their moral principles, just as its direct operation debases the negro.

What religious instruction can flourish under such a system, with an enmity to the whole attempt in the breast of the white, and a conviction that the introduction of Christianity would subvert his unjust dominion? What success can it have, when the time and labour of the slave are exacted to the last moment? What success can it have, when the old vices of heathenism are aggravated by the licentious lives of professed Christians, and new vices are generated in rapid profusion by slavery itself? How can the hand which continues to inflict the disease, be, at the same time, really administering the cure? Go to the tomb of the martyred missionary, and estimate the hatred of the slave-owner to vital Christianity!

Accordingly, in one of the most improved parishes in all the West Indian islands, where religious education has been most successful, out of one hundred properties, forty-six, containing upwards of eleven thousand slaves, refuse admission altogether to the minister of religion; and in the remaining fifty-four, only one half hour a week is allowed for school, during the dinner-time of the negroes, when from weariness few of those near at hand can avail themselves of the benefit, whilst the rest, from their distance, cannot do so at all.* The religious instruction is thus little more than a pretence, which deceives and hoodwinks the people of England. Even the education which is given, is not extended to reading, but is merely an oral instruction in the Church Catechism. In towns, indeed, and amongst the free blacks, education is making some way; but the mass of your field slaves are now in a worse moral and religious state than they and their parents were on the coast of heathen Africa.

But even supposing religion were taught in theory, what can it be in practice? Will slavery allow the developement of its holy principles? You teach the slave Christianity; but will you allow him to keep either the first table of the law, or the second? Can he live in the love of God and man? No. You forbid him the fourth commandment; and you leave him to live in the violation of the seventh. Where is the HOLY SABBATH for the rest, and celebration of the worship, of God? Where THE LAW OF MARRIAGE for the cultivation of the domestic virtues and the bringing up of the next generation in the fear of God? You deny him both—you compel him to work on the Lord's day—you open the Sunday market—you offer him the profanation of the Sabbath or starvation. Thus you make the first table of the law impossible by blotting out the day of holiness, of repose, of intellectual improvement, of religious meditation, of the public and private worship of God. And next you discourage the sacred institution of marriage, the spring and fountain of the

* St. Thomas in the East, Jamaica.

virtuous affections, the bond of the second table of the law, the barrier against licentiousness with all its consequent vices. And you call this meagre, detruncated carcase of religion, Christianity.

No: this, this is the consummation of the misery of the colonial slave. He is barred out from the hopes and elevation of that blessed go: which is as much his birth-right as it is ours. Slavery is a barrier against spiritual improvement. It is the ban and condemnation of the soul of man. You begin with the body, you end with the immortal spirit of your fellow-creature. You oppress his animal frame, you crush his social affections, you rob him of his liberty, his peace, his time, his intellectual nature, you degrade and debase him below the brute; and then, in order that you may keep him there, you deny him the light and grace of that revelation which would assuage his present sufferings, and teach him to look forward to an eternity of purity and joy. The soul of our fellow-man chained down in ignorance, resigned to moral darkness, bound and tied in the fetters of sin and corruption, given over to more than heathen vices, mocked with a form of Christianity—the bad passions fomented by the goadings of injustice, the good nipped by the deprivation of hope—this is colonial slavery—thus is man “drawn unto death, and ready to be slain.”

If these, then, are the facts as to our African population, I ask, are we not, as a nation, guilty in neglecting to rescue them from their miseries? Have we not withheld and forborn that active and strenuous aid which might long ago have effected their deliverance? Yes, I CHARGE THE BRITISH NATION WITH A GUILTY CONNIVANCE AND APATHY. “Every man,” Bishop Sanderson well observes on our text, “according to his place and power, but especially those that, being in place of magistracy and judicature, are armed with public authority for it, are both in charity and justice obliged to use the utmost of their power, to lay hold on all fit opportunities of lawful means, to help those to right that suffer wrong, to stand by their poorer brethren and neighbours in the day of their calamities and distress, and to set in for them thoroughly and stoutly in their righteous causes; to protect them from injury, to deliver them from the bonds of them that are too mighty or too crafty for them, and seek by violence or cunning to deprive them either of their lives or livelihoods.”

Alas, two hundred years have elapsed since the commencement of this frightful system, and it continues in one entire division of its evils, to the present hour. One branch, indeed, the trade in slaves, has been abolished. We have ceased, since the year 1807, to seize and tear our fellow-creatures from the coasts of Africa; but the slavery itself—the source of that felonious traffic—remains; the unhappy men whom we now detain in bondage, are themselves the victims, as their parents were before them, of that first direful and cruel injustice. And yet we still forbear to deliver them. Our princes, our governors, our legislators, our magistrates, our clergy, our commonalty, are “verily guilty,” in different degrees, “concerning their brethren,”—it is their neglect, their silence, their

cowardice, their selfishness, which has tolerated for twenty-three long years this large half of the fatal system.

The first burst, indeed, of honest indignation, when the horrors of the colonial slave-trade and slavery were displayed in their origin, progress, and consummation, before the eyes of the nation forty years since, was deep and sincere; one feeling penetrated the houses of parliament, and the general mass of the community. All but those immediately engaged in the evil itself, rose up as one man to put down the mighty oppression. But delay was interposed; hardy denials of the facts were adventured; expediency was suggested against principle and duty; the warmth of men's minds cooled. We forbore, we hesitated, we closed our eyes and ears to the truth. Calculation of base interest, prepossessions in powerful quarters; sloth, fear of giving offence, dislike of trouble and inconvenience interposed, and years were consumed in obtaining even one branch of the act of reparation. In order to this, it was found necessary, in 1791 and 1792, to separate the questions of the Slave Trade and Slavery. Even after this concession, the traffic was defended, pleaded for, maintained with so much pertinacity, that the partial victory was not gained till after twenty wearisome years of conflict.

Our remissness then returned. We forbore once again to deliver "them that were drawn unto death," and whom we had confessed to have been obtained by a crime justly branded as piracy. Had we followed out at once the dictates of those feelings which procured for us the abolition of the traffic; had we pursued the triumph with due perseverance, into its consequences in the West India islands, colonial slavery would long ago have ceased, our bondmen would have been free and happy labourers, and our islands would have become what, by their natural beauties they are calculated for, the garden of the empire.

But the case was remote. It was not Englishmen who were suffering. Had a single British family been discovered in an adjoining isle, kidnapped from our shores, and held in unjust and cruel bondage—driven by the whip to excessive toil, degraded and depressed by neglect and scorn, deprived of the rest of the Sabbath, the rights of marriage, and the privilege of religion—had Africa committed one such act of atrocity upon England, the whole nation would have joined in the cry of detestation. Not only the first seizure, but the continued detention would have been reprobated with horror; the captives, with their households, would have been instantly set free, and the severest punishment would have been inflicted on the odious slave-owners. But because it is Englishmen who have inflicted the crime upon Africans; because the scene is distant; because the cries of misery do not actually ring in our ears; because the gains of the iniquity are supposed to be great; because the oppressors say they are now ameliorating the condition of their victims; because party and political contentions have mingled with the question;—therefore we hesitate, we are silent, we delay. Other topics rouse the attention of parliament, this does not. Other topics animate the breasts of statesmen, nobles, magistrates; this wearies them. Other national sins fill the mouths of the ministers of religion; this dies upon their lips. Even an incorporated

society for propagating the gospel has possessed, with but little actual improvement, a slave estate for more than a century. All is death-like silence. The advocate for the poor blacks, in or out of parliament, is heard with suspicion. Few will go so far as to deny the facts of the case, but all shrink from the duty of repairing them; all wish to defer the act of justice; all content themselves with vapid generalities and ineffective resolutions. The miserable traveller lies before us—his unjust and cruel sufferings plead for pity—his wounds are unassuaged—he is half dead; we come up to the place where he is; but instead of having compassion on him as the good Samaritan, and binding up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and taking care of him—we pass by, with the Priest and Levite, on the other side.

II. AND WHAT CAN BE THE EXCUSES BY WHICH THIS NEGLECT IS CONCEALED AND PALLIATED? This is the next question. Our text intimates that this is the secret operation going on in the breast. "If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not;" if thou callest the scruples of conscience by whispering to thy heart, or saying to others, "I was not aware of the circumstances; I knew not the aggravation of the case; I did not think I could do any material service; I did not judge it was my duty to intermeddle; I waited for further information; I could not see my way; I was as well disposed as possible towards the cause, but I knew not how to act."

By such arts of self-delusion has man, ever since the fall of our first parents, hidden truth from himself. The process especially goes on in cases where the inclinations and fears are on one side, and the duty on the other—where the difficulties, apparent or real, are near at hand, and the duty affects persons or a race of men at a great distance;—where numbers in authority, princes, legislators, are unwilling to be disturbed; and where lapse of time and copiousness of debate have chilled the sympathies, and irritated the passions of disputants.

The minister of religion, then, must come forward at such a crisis; he must rend aside the veil; he must lay open the human heart; he must drag into the blaze of day the hidden sophisms of the ill-informed and torpid conscience. He must show, that if the plea of ignorance might have been plausibly urged before the case had been fully developed, it cannot be fairly urged now;—that if it be still pleaded, the plea is our accusation; that, at all events, it shall no longer be in the power of those who will listen to his statements, to allege it another instant.

1. If the excuse of ignorance could ever have been plausibly urged, it must have been thirty or forty years since, before the full development of the facts had been made. Yes, the commencements of the barbarous iniquity towards the close of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, were studiously concealed. Our Queen Elizabeth declared to Sir John Hawkins, That if the labourers were taken from Africa without their free consent, the vengeance of the Almighty would fall upon him. Till the year 1787, the real case was never understood. A culpable negligence this in the immediate servants of government both at home and in the islands; but leaving undoubtedly the great body of the nation in ignorance of the truth.

As a people represented and acting by our rulers, and princes, and parliament, we were doubtless guilty before the Almighty of forbearing to deliver our injured brethren ; but the mass of Englishmen were individually unacquainted with the facts. Still these would have come out—the narratives of our captains and mariners would have spread ; the return of our adventurers, and settlers, and merchants, and slave-owners, would have proclaimed the mighty injustice, had we been duly alive to the duties of humanity. The plea, therefore, was never wholly good in conscience.

2. But the time when this could be pleaded at all has long passed. For more than forty years have the facts been accumulating in a degree to which there perhaps never was a parallel. Evidence taken before the Privy Council ; debates in the British Parliament ; admissions by the most eager advocates of the system ; the books and histories of the West Indian slave-owners ; the various enactments of amelioration, (however inefficient in practice,) which have proceeded on the supposition of pre-existing evils ; the daily progress of events, as attested by eye-witnesses, men of all parties, clergymen and missionaries of undoubted piety, travellers, officers under government—the publications which profess to answer particular charges ; the unimpeachable evidence deducible from the waste of human life ; every kind of proof converges to pour light into that dark and wretched dungeon where we retain our ill-gotten captives. It is impossible for any one, in the least acquainted with the history of his country, to say, “ Behold, we know not ” the original injustice in which the system of colonial slavery was founded ; we know not the terror and oppression and cruelty, and overworking, in which it consists ; we know not the degradation of man below the intellectual and moral destinies of an immortal creature which it entails ; we know not the barrier it erects against all effectual means of evangelizing and saving our brother. Nothing of this can be said with any show of reason ; the colonial slave-owners have no case.

They may allege, indeed, that they differ in opinion with us, as to the evil of slavery ; as to the import of the words justice and humanity ; as to the idea of what is reasonable in conduct and behaviour towards the slave ; as to the degree of sin against God which the system involves. No doubt, all this may be said ; as like things are said concerning every dictate of justice and religion in this country. But truth is truth ; the ten commandments are the ten commandments ; robbery and cruelty and oppression, do not lose their properties ; justice and humanity are terms well understood. And we may safely leave to the religious and moral feelings of Englishmen, the determination of these questions, the real facts being admitted. All we want is to detect the flimsy excuse, “ Behold, we knew it not.” If the attention can now be firmly fixed upon the case, every thing else must follow. No one can fairly urge ignorance. We know enough. Almost any part of the evidence now before the world is sufficient for our cause. A single Jamaica newspaper ; a single West India pamphlet contains more admissions than we require. In truth, the difficulty is

in the multitude, not the defect, of evidence. We are lost in the multiplicity and variety of proofs. I may truly say as to myself, that though I have attended to the question for more than thirty years, and have read lately almost every thing of consequence that has come in my way, I am conscious I do not know a hundredth part of the whole evils of the system. Memory fails—the heart sickens—the repetition weakens the impression, if we attempt to follow out the details of the enormous mischief. But enough is known, or may be known, by every one, for all practicable purposes.

3. Where, then, are our excuses? where our pretensions of ignorance? If we allege them, the very plea becomes our accusation. For, why are we so torpid, so unfeeling as to remain uninformed, when all England is ringing with the complaints of injured Africa? What but our torpor can account for a state of ignorance, which, instead of excusing, aggravates our guilt? And yet I fear it may be truly said, THAT NINE-TENTHS OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND ARE AT THIS MOMENT UNACQUAINTED WITH THE BEARINGS OF A SYSTEM WHICH THEIR APATHY UPHOLDS AND CONTINUES. Yes, I admit the ignorance on which your plea rests; but I reject the plea built upon it: I allow you may be superficially informed—I allow that once you may have felt warmly, but you feel so no longer; that you just had your first emotions of humanity awakened, but that they have sunk into a death-like stillness; and that now nothing arouses your attention: you take up with the first excuse that occurs to your mind; you say, you have done all you can; you know little of late; you believe ameliorations have taken place; you think the question has become a party and political one; you are weary of it. I allow your plea—but I found on it my accusation. I arraign you for this very ignorance on one of the greatest moral questions which the cause of insulted justice ever brought before a religious nation. Out of your own mouth may you be judged. It is such pleas which constitute the guilt of neglecting your oppressed brother. You are the very best friends of colonial slavery; you allow the crime, yet defend it; you admit truth, and yet palliate and delay; you profess, and yet hesitate and restrain;—in a word, you “forbear to deliver those that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;” you say, “Behold, we knew it not.”

4. But I will not allow this excuse to be pleaded, so far as I am concerned, an instant longer. If you are ignorant, you shall be so no more. You are now in the temple of the Almighty; and whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, you shall learn if you will grant me your attention, the whole truth: you shall see the present position of the question.

Know, then, that after forty years no material ameliorations, however loudly promised, have been effected. The colonial slavery now is, substantially, what it was when the first cry of surprise and indignation burst from the House of Parliament in 1789 and 1790. The recommendations of the warmest friends of the West Indian system have not been followed; the dictates of obvious self-interest have not been listened to; the hopes of the abolitionists of the traffic in 1807 have been bitterly disappointed; the warnings of nearly half a century

have been in vain. All remains as it was, an unjust, oppressive, cruel, brutalizing, heathenish, and more than heathenish bondage. Even if many of the proposed ameliorations had been honestly attempted, they would have fallen far short of effectually healing the evil. Slavery cannot be amended without ceasing to be slavery. Abolish the cart-whip, limit the hours of labour, restrain the despotic power of man over his fellow, put an end to arbitrary punishments, open the door of manumission, give the slave the just compensation for his toil, grant him food and raiment and impartial justice and the blessings of religion, and he is no longer a slave. In these consists the essence of the degradation by which man is transformed into the brute and the machine; and all these evils continue, and will and must continue, whilst the system is persevered in.

But know, again, that all hope of deliverance of our injured brethren from the colonial assemblies and the West India slave-farmers and proprietors, is vain. It is not in the nature of a vicious system to cure itself. The very habits of arbitrary power incapacitate the taskmasters from commiserating and rescuing his captive. This is to let the lion legislate for the lamb. There is NO EXECUTORY POWER, as Mr. Burke long since observed. The colonists have neither the will nor the instruments, for ameliorating the system. It works its direful effects by the immutable laws of God's judicial government. Founded in crime, sustained by the continued violation of the fundamental rules of justice, nothing can amend it. And least of all can those who are inflicting the injury, repair it. There is an infatuation which is the invariable result of arbitrary power of contempt of our brother, of cruelty, licentiousness and lust of gain, when long continued in and wrought into the habit, which spreads a contagion around the slave-property and the slave-owner, and, like the jaundiced eye, prevents any just view from being taken of the object immediately before it. We might as well expect the pope to make Spain protestant, as the West Indians to make the slaves happy and free.

Know, further, that the crisis is now arrived in the circumstances of the question to which I have more than once adverted. This is what generally happens in cases of great injustice. Some favourable moments present themselves. The crisis in the present instance is this. The resolutions of the Government of England, solemnly passed in the British Parliament in 1823, have been rejected by the colonial assemblies. Instead of being received and acted upon, as their chief friends in this country undertook they should, and declared they ought, they have been scorned and mocked at. An open contumacy has been manifested. In the mean time, their adherents in England have turned round upon the Government, and abetted this contumacy, and declared that the colonies had done every thing that was HUMANE AND PRACTICABLE. Thus the great question is cast again upon the Government and Parliament of Great Britain—that is, upon the feelings and sentiments of the country at large, which that Government and Parliament represent. The evil remains undressed—all pretence of expectation from the slave-master is void—it remains to be seen whether this Protestant and religious na-

tion will support their King and Parliament in delivering the oppressed, or whether, obdurate and infatuated, they will "refuse to let them go."

In order to the right and vigorous exertion of our moral influence at this conjuncture, the minister of religion comes forward. He awakens the voice of conscience. He dissipates the pleas of ignorance. He calls on the nation to repent of their past negligence, and to return to God, by "undoing the heavy burden and letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke." Or rather, he looks up to Almighty God to produce these salutary effects. He knows that the corruption and selfishness of man are too deeply seated to yield to any force of argument, unless aided by a divine power; and therefore he appeals.—

III. TO THAT ALL-SEEING EYE OF GOD WHICH DETECTS AND OVERRULES OUR EXCUSES, AND WHICH SHOULD LEAD US INSTANTLY TO RISE UP TO THE DISCHARGE OF OUR PARAMOUNT DUTY TOWARDS OUR FRIENDLESS AFRICAN BROTHER.

For the sacred writer appeals to the Almighty in the closing words of the text—"Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?" What an affecting and penetrating address! What a contrast between the pleas and excuses of man and the unerring judgment of God! Yes, nothing will move a great nation to an effective act of justice, after a long guilty forbearance and delay, but the instant voice of religion. Excuses must not be answered, but silenced. It is the heart, not the intellectual faculty which is in fault. Mark, then, my fellowcountrymen, the penetrating knowledge of the Judge who is here appealed to—the benefits he is constantly bestowing on us—the last dread tribunal to which he will summon us.

1. You hesitate to "deliver those that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; you say, Behold, we knew it not;" but recollect THE PENETRATING KNOWLEDGE OF THAT ALL-SEEING GOD who calls you to the duty. He knows all the secret windings of the heart—he "considers the ways of man"—he "pondereth all his goings"—"every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondereth the heart." His all-seeing eye is brighter than ten thousand suns—it enters the soul—it searches out our motives—it pervades the darkest recesses of the conscience.

And has not that all-seeing God commanded you to "love your neighbour as yourself?" Has he not commanded you "to do unto others as you would they should do unto you?" Has he not said, "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work?" Has he not said, "Defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy; deliver the needy and poor, rid them out of the hand of the oppressor?"

And what are your excuses of ignorance, and good intention, and future resolutions, in the face of these plain and unbending truths of

eternal righteousness? What are your delays and hesitations in a case of downright justice and mercy to a whole race of injured fellow-creatures? "Doth not he that pondereth thine heart, consider" the real selfishness, which is the spring of thy torpor; doth not he know the secret motives which govern thy indifference? Doth he not see through these vain pretensions, and record the guilt of those who allege them?

2. But this is not all. "He that pondereth thy heart," sustains thee also in life every moment, and preserves thee and blesses thee by night and by day. "He that keepeth thy soul, shall he not know it?" REMEMBER HIS CONSTANT BENEFITS. Consider God as "upholding thine own soul in life;" as "preserving thy spirit by his constant visitation;" as being thy "keeper and guardian;" as "neither slumbering nor sleeping" in his care over thee. And wilt thou not keep and guard others? Wilt thou say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—when thou hast first robbed him from his native land, and then imprisoned him in hopeless bondage, and then oppressed and degraded him by thy contempt and scorn, and then denied him the common rights of natural justice, and then delayed forty years and more to repair his wrongs, though the facts stare thee in the face, and thy brother's cries pierce the ears of eternal mercy? Wilt thou not, at length, deliver him and let him go free, when God is keeping thee daily, when he can withdraw his protection at any moment from thy person, thy family, thy merchandize, thy concerns; and infix in thy bosom those pangs of remorse which nothing can appease? And is not this all-seeing God, in his righteous providence, able to keep thee in body and soul, if thou returnest to thy duty, and performest the act of justice which thou hast so long delayed? Shall not thy property, thy commerce, thy general prosperity, be better kept by the favour of the Almighty, than by the narrow, paltry views of a worldly selfishness?

3. And look forward to THE LAST SOLEMN SENTENCE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT-SEAT, when "he will render to every man according to his works." Yes, every cry of anguish, every groan and tear of the oppressed African, every sigh which bursts from his broken heart, all his degradation, his woe, his unrighteous oppression, are recorded on high—together with thy hardness of heart, thy forbearing to deliver him, thy vain excuses, thy withholding and "shutting up thy bowels of compassion" from him.

Yes, that just and holy God will not always leave the disparities and inequalities of his moral government, unredressed. The time of retribution will come. He will "arise in his anger; he will lift up himself, because of the rage of his enemies; he will awake to the judgment which he has commanded."

Human laws cannot always detect these neglects, this indifference, this coldness of heart, these omissions; but divine can, and will. Human judges cannot pretend to dive into the heart and scrutinize the motives; but the all-seeing Judge can, and will. Human tribunals cannot determine with certainty the exact means of information afforded to each individual, and the degree of guilt incurred; the

divine tribunal can, and will. Human laws cannot insure the observation of their precepts, nor discover all the miseries flowing from their violation; divine can, and will. Human jurisprudence cannot always escape delusion, art, chicane; cannot execute its own decrees; cannot compel acts of restitution to be performed, when the culprits are numerous and powerful: divine jurisprudence can accomplish all these, and every other end of righteousness and truth.

Even in this world a retributive justice is more frequently exercised than we are apt to believe, though it take a long and secret course. If we knew all the hidden effects of British colonial slavery during the sad and mournful period of its continuance, we should be able to trace the judicial inflictions of the Almighty—in the demoralized state of the white masters; in the decay of prosperity and derangement of mercantile adventure; in the blight on moral and domestic happiness; in the bankrupt state of much of the property concerned; in the infatuation which seems to reject all counsel, and blind men to their plainest duty.

And national judgments are now stalking abroad to avenge the cause of the helpless, if we repent not. God glories in being "the Father of the fatherless," and the "Judge of the widow." Nor is it in vain that he hath said, "If thou oppress the fatherless, it shall come to pass, that when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; FOR I AM GRACIOUS."

But it is in the last final account that the most solemn import of my text will be fulfilled. And it is surely most remarkable that in our Lord's sublime description of that day, the condemnation of the wicked is mainly placed on their refusing that aid to the calamitous which they might have afforded. "For I was hungered," will the King say to them on his left hand, "and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not;"—that is, "Ye forbore to deliver them that were drawn unto death, and those that were ready to be slain." And when the wicked allege the excuse, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee;"—that is, "Behold, we knew it not;"—the King is described as saying, "Forasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not unto me;" that is, "Doth not he that pondereth the heart, consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?—and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Awake, then, my Christian brethren, to this great act of national and individual justice, each in his station, and according to his natural influence. We have delayed too long. Now, at length, let us "set in stoutly and thoroughly," as Bishop Sanderson expresses it, in behalf of our brother. A conjuncture has now arrived. The open rejection of all design of liberating their captives has been avowed by the colonial assemblies. The whole question is thus cast upon our national sense of justice, our national conscience, our national

fear of God. There is not a word to be said in defence of the system. The oppression of negro slavery is, in its origin, unjust; in its details, debasing and cruel; in its continuance, the most daring affront to the eternal majesty of Heaven, which, perhaps, was ever offered by an enlightened, humane, and religious people. The inconsistency is as glaring, as the crime itself is atrocious. It cannot bear the light. Let England once arouse herself, and understand the facts and bearings of the system, and she will suffer it to exist no longer.

Forbear not, then, by apathy and indifference, from "delivering those that are drawn unto death." Forbear not, YE MINISTERS OF THE RELIGION OF THE TENDER AND COMPASSIONATE JESUS. Imitate the boldness of your Redeemer, who never spoke with so much energy as when exposing the excuses, and condemning the oppression of the Scribes and Pharisees. Imitate the holy prophets of old, who spared not the national iniquities, but publicly denounced every great instance of the violation of God's law, and most especially the cruelties of the powerful against the helpless. Say not, this is a political question: the times when it could be called such are passed. It is now a moral question, a religious question, a question of national feeling, and imperious national duty.

The minister of Christ who is now silent, cannot be innocent; he becomes an accessory to all the misery he might possibly prevent. The magnitude of the evil, the length of time that it has endured, the overwhelming evidence which proves it, make it the duty of every one to use his utmost power, and strain every nerve, to arouse the general conscience.

And if this voice of mine could be supposed capable of fixing the attention of the VENERABLE BISHOPS AND PASTORS OF THE CHURCH, I would venture to say, that never would the national church appear more truly in character, than by its dignitaries rising in their own house of Parliament, and taking the lead in this measure. Never could the example of Porteus, and Barrington, and Horsley, and Burgess, be so well followed, as at a crisis like the present, when the Christian bishop should be heard protesting openly against the continuance of a slavery which outrages religion, wounds and afflicts humanity, disgraces Christendom, and bars out the conversion and salvation of nearly a million of injured fellow-subjects.

And if the preacher might be permitted to address the LEGISLATORS, AND MINISTERS OF STATE, AND NOBLES of his country, he would venture to sound aloud in their ears, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." He would venture to assert that the blessing of God on our national councils can never be expected, if we longer forbear—now that the case is thrown upon us—to deliver our afflicted brother. Justice and honesty are the best policy. Nothing can be so wise, so prudent, so politic, as to obey God, and leave the consequences. And what will these consequences be, if we frankly follow the voice of duty? Let the minister of religion be allowed to say, That never were the consequences of doing a great act of justice to be compared, in point of actual evil, to the consequences of persevering in the crime. Look the thing boldly in the

face, grapple with the enormous iniquity, resolve, without delay, to enter on the measures necessary for its abolition, and all will be comparatively easy ; difficulties will vanish—God will help and bless.

But if we hesitate, if we forbear, if we tamper with conscience, if we listen to tales of expediency, if we consult petty and subordinate interests—which can never be arranged before hand, but which fall afterwards into their place—if we shrink from the fair and main and commanding duty, other help may be raised up for the poor negro ; other means may be devised by the divine Judge of the world ; and we may read, when too late, our folly in our punishment. The act of abolition once resolved on by a noble effort of religious patriotism, the details will soon be adjusted—compensation soon adjusted—the time and manner of giving full effect to the general act of mercy adjusted. Awake, then, legislators, statesmen, religious princes and senators. Act upon your principles as Christians. Resolve to be just and righteous. Say to the African, Be free !

But I may hope, with yet more boldness, to address the RELIGIOUS AND THOUGHTFUL CLASS OF MY COUNTRYMEN—unperverted by party feeling—the strength and stay of our government—the loyal and affectionate subjects of our beloved Monarch. It is upon you, at last, that the success of the question, under God's blessing, reposes. You are the voice of England. You speak by your petitions. You act by your representatives. Be united in a wise and temperate and loyal, but firm and resolute expression of your feelings on this enormous iniquity, and it will soon cease ; government will be enabled to carry the measure ; Parliament will know they have the nation with them. You have encouraged, by your silence, your indifference, your apathy, the mass of evil. You have been too tame, too lukewarm. Your rulers have copied your example. Now forbear no longer. Now put away from you this great transgression. Now by all peaceful and loyal methods resolve to deliver your brother. Never was the crisis so important. You might have said at any former period, " Measures are in train—hopes may be entertained—the colonial assemblies may possibly act—the government may be able to do all that is necessary." But you cannot say it now : if you forbear, all is hopeless—you rivet upon the slave his fetters, till Almighty justice burst them as with a thunder-storm, and involve you in the ruin. At this moment all is easy. You may yet undo the evil. Say not you are not prepared with the details of a measure complete in all its parts. This is not your business. Government and Parliament can only do this. Your duty is plain. Express your feelings on the moral question ; say, African oppression shall cease ; say, you will support your rulers, and stand by them as a nation, in accomplishing this. This is what is wanting. The selfishness, cowardice, dread of possible consequences, proneness to delay common to all human governments, will never be overruled, but by your manly and determined representations.

Consider how much is now expected of you. Remember THE ORIGINAL HORRORS OF THE TRAGE AND THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, the robbery and murder of a barbarous people, and the violation of all

equity and justice on which the present colonial system rests. I have already adverted to this, but I urge it once more. It is only twenty-two or twenty-three short years since you ceased perpetrating these atrocities. You had no more right to commit them on Africa, than Africa would have had to commit them on you; or than some Irish had to commit them, as we are told they did in the twelfth century, on the inhabitants of Bristol. Nature shudders at colonial slavery, in its birth and growth and maturity.

Consider, also, that you owe this act of reparation and justice as **AN EXAMPLE TO EUROPE**. England is the centre of this fearful arch of injustice and cruelty. She holds together, by her persevering inertness, the system which desolates Africa and blights our western hemisphere. It is in vain for her to talk of having made the slave traffic piracy; of having attempted to ameliorate the condition of her slaves. France and Spain and Portugal know too well the facts. Let England, then, forbear no longer this paramount duty. Let her abolish slavery, and she may hope to conciliate all the European powers in an effective resolution to copy her righteous conduct.

But, lastly, let us remember the **HIGH RELIGIOUS ADVANTAGES** which we enjoy in this favoured country, and let these bind upon us the motives which I have developed from the text. It is not merely the all-seeing eye of God—it is not merely the future judgment of the last day which I would appeal to, to dissipate your excuses and move you to this act of deliverance of the slave. It is rather on the mercies of the gospel that I would dwell—it is upon the religious light and privileges of Englishmen that I would rest my cause—it is upon the mercy of God in redemption, upon the gift of pardon, the promises of grace, the hopes of heaven, that I would repose. Our Protestant reformed creed, our churches, our ministers, our sacraments, our Bibles, our schools, our missions, our various schemes of benevolence, are all so many additional arguments for our not forbearing longer the act of mercy, which we have already forborn too long. The brighter the effulgence of grace and truth in our land, the deeper that gloom which hovers over our colonial islands. The more resplendent and glorious our religious and civil liberty, the more odious that inconsistency which reserves a dungeon for our injured brethren. Yes, it is in vain to attempt to drown the cries of anguish which arise from that dungeon, by shouts of applause at the success of missions, and voices of mutual congratulation at our religious activity. Let the oppressed first go free. Be just to your poor slaves, before you are generous to foreign captives. Convert your heathen brethren, before you boast of converting distant nations. Thus shall the "blessings of them that are ready to perish come upon you." Thus shall your home and foreign objects of benevolence be doubly successful. Thus shall you recover your station as a Christian nation. Thus shall future ages say, England was at last true to her character—she arose at the cry of oppression—she broke off the chains of the captive—she ventured all consequences in doing her primary duty—she delivered them "that were drawn unto death, and those that were ready to be

slain," relying on the blessing of that God who "pondereth the heart, and who will render to every man according to his works."

And do Thou be pleased, O God of mercy, to look upon us as a nation ! Do Thou move the heart of the people as the heart of one man ! Do Thou touch us with compunction ! Do Thou permit us to repair this mighty injustice, before Thou smitest us for our refusal to do so ! Do Thou permit and enable us to break the chains of bondage, ere Thou burst them in thine indignation ! Do Thou assist us to rise above all difficulties and to resist all temptations to delay, and to set a pattern of justice at length to that world, which we have been injuring by our example of selfishness and cruelty ! Do Thou enable us to make what compensation we can to the oppressed negro race, for the long wrongs we have done them !

Suffer us not to go on in our provocations of thy divine Majesty ! Give us not over, as thou justly mightest, to hardness of heart. LET US NOT REFUSE, LIKE PHARAOH OF OLD, TO LET THE PEOPLE GO, till thy vengeance is uplifted against us, till thou sendest confusion into our councils, a blight upon all our prosperity, war in our borders, ruin in our national concerns, despair and death in our land !

Let us yet,—O let us, by Thy mercy, be still the people of Thy pasture ! Let truth and righteousness abound among us ! Let us set the captives free, and nobly trust to Thee in following the path of duty ! Let Thy gospel yet flourish among us ! Let our church enjoy thy benediction !

Let our nation be still the glory of the reformed countries, the herald of liberty and peace and social order and religion, to the neighbouring states ; the messenger of grace to the Jew and the Gentile ; the dispenser of happiness and salvation to mankind ! And then to Thy name, thy mercy, thy long-suffering, thy power, thy grace, shall be the praise for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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